families of the hostages were also issued, and the act of abduction was uniformly condemned.

2. As part of the policy of treansparancy, and with the aim of making a joint effort to secure the release of the hostages, right from the beginning, the Government maintained close and continuous contact with the diplomatic representatives of the countries whose nationals have been abducted, Experts from these countries were also associated from time to time in this process. This mutual consultation, cooperation and interaction continues.

3. The abductors claiming to belong to a group called AL Faran had demanded the release of 22 named and unnamed militants, including a number of Pakistan Nationals/residents of POK who are important/activists of the Pakistan based international Terrorist Group, the Harkat-ul-Ansar. The socalled Al-Faran group has not been heard of before, and all the available information clearly indicates that it is nothing but a front of the Harket-ul-Ansar. Action has also been taken through diplomatic channels to prevail upon the Government in Pakistan to use their influence to secure the release of the hostages. At the same time efforts are continuing to identify, the individuals who perpetrated the abdcution and to locate the hostages as well as the abductors.

Natural Gas

860 SHRI SHANTILAL PARSOTAMDAS PATEL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) the quantity of natural gas being utilised currently in Gujarat State;

(b) the quantity of gas flaring up every day in the State; and

(c) the quantity of gas being processed into LPG and the plan for increasing LPG production in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU) : (a) Around 15.5 MMSCMD of gas is currently being utilised in Gujarat.

(b) 0 84 MMSCMD of gas is currently being flared in Gujarat.

(c) At present around 7 MMSCMD of gas is being processed for LPG extraction in Gujarat. GAIL has proposed setting up a new 370,000 MTPA LPG plant at Gandhar

Mineral Deposits

861 DR LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY : Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state

(a) whether sea-floor hydro thermal system of mineral deposits has been discovered near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands;

(b) if so, whether these deposits are rich in vast mineral resources, rich in platinum, gold, silver and other metals; and

(c) the steps so far taken/proposed to be taken to develop and exploit the resources and the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) Surveys carried out by the National Institute of Oceanography, Goa have identified hydro thermal activity near the Andaman Nicobar Islands.

(b) While the hydro thermal activity is conducive to the formulation of deposits rich in metals like platinum, gold, silver etc., NIO is conducting surveys to locate such deposits.

(c) Government is putting together an inter-departmental programme for detailed exploration of the hydro thermal activity areas.

[Translation]

LPG Misuse

862. SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH :
SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether petromax (gas lantern) are being sold on a large scale in the country thereby encouraging the black-marketing of LPG;

(b) if so, whether the Government have taken any action to check the illegal sale of these petromax;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU) : (a) to (d). During February 1993, Government had permitted, under the parallel marketing scheme, private entrepreneurs to import and market LPG at market determined prices through their own network. No complaint has been received regarding diversion of LPG from Public Sector Oil Companies for use in Petromax (gas lanterns). However, oil companies regularly conduct inspections of their distributors at various levels. If any distributor is found diverting domestic LPG for any other purpose, action is initiated under Marketing Discipline Guidelines against the erring distributor.

However, it is understood that some private sector companies are selling petromaxes, based on different petroleum fuels, for which they may have obtained necessary approval from concerned authorities.